

Book Reviews

of her having a loving and spiritually enriched childhood that carried her through difficult life experiences. She lost her mother at age ten, for example, and experienced racial discrimination and sexual exploitation. The unique offering of this book, however, is its examination of Hudley's positive life experiences. Haight and Miller argue for the importance of Hudley's story, not as a stereotypical "virtuous, strong black grandmother" story, but as a contrast to the typical "risk and disadvantage" narratives that are often found in scholarly works on African American human development.

Edith Hudley's vibrant and colourful stories evoke the joyful memories she has of her childhood with her parents, of growing into adulthood, and becoming a wife and mother herself under the supportive guidance of the "other mothers" she had in her life. Further, she shares the story of becoming an "other mother" to her own granddaughter, who was abandoned by Hudley's daughter-in-law, and to the other children she cares for from her Utah church congregation.

Raise Up a Child offers an African American perspective on child rearing that reflects a general spiritual and cultural experience that is shared historically by many in African American communities. It offers readers a first-person account and demonstrates the need to study diverse cultural models of human development. It also serves as a useful instructional text for readers interested in positive child rearing practices.

Family Secrets: Crossing the Colour Line

Catherine Slaney.

Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2003.

Reviewed by Karen Nelson Villanueva

In 1975, when a renowned sociologist and authority on Black people in Canada discovers the Abbott Collection, Catherine Slaney's uncle decides that it is time to reveal the family secret: that Slaney's family is descended from Dr. Anderson Ruffin Abbott, the first Canadian-born Black doctor. At age 24, Slaney and her family discover their Black heritage when they were formerly living as white.

Published by Natural Heritage Books, a publishing house that celebrates the rich history and contribution of Blacks in Canada, *Family Secrets: Crossing the Colour Line* attempts to tell the story of Slaney's ancestors. The author traces the Abbott's history as former slaves in the United States, their arrival in Canada, how her great-great-grandfather, Anderson Ruffin Abbott, became

the first Canadian-born Black to graduate as a medical doctor from the University of Toronto, and her reunion with “lost” Black relations in the United States. This is a story of a mixed-descent Black family which exemplifies the ancestry of many who have “passed” for white.

Although she has known for thirty years of her multi-racial heritage, Slaney insists she is white and continues to “pass.” She tells of attending a workshop for women writers of colour where the presenter mistook her for white; henceforth she felt unaccepted by people of colour. At the same time, she recounts that white people repeatedly ask why she is dark-skinned. When she attributes her skin colour to a fallacious Spanish great-grandmother, she fails to recognize this rejection of her whiteness. In another instance, she visits a church of light-skinned Blacks in Detroit. When the congregants assume she is Black, she believes they are mistaken and clings steadfastly to her desire to be white, despite all indications to the contrary. At every juncture, Slaney fails to prove that she is not a light-skinned Black woman passing for white.

Slaney’s unwillingness to interrogate her own identity is disappointing. She wants to be proud of her ancestry but is unwilling to embrace her complex identity as a woman who is part Black. In fact, she claims the “one drop rule”—that Blackness is determined by one drop of Black blood—no longer exists. Regrettably, Slaney misses an important opportunity to celebrate her multi-cultural identity, and to serve as an example for others of mixed-racial heritage. It is especially unfortunate that she chooses instead to deny her Black heritage and proclaim her whiteness.

The Mommy Brain: How Motherhood Makes Us Smarter

Katherine Ellison.

Jackson, Tennessee: Basic Books, 2005.

Reviewed by Cyndi Brannen

In *The Mommy Brain: How Motherhood Makes Us Smarter*, Katherine Ellison provides neurological evidence to help women justify their decision to become a mother *and* demonstrates how mothers often realign their full-time career goals once their heightened intelligence takes over their previously selfish—and sluggish—brains. Ellison herself was once a globetrotting reporter who shifted her career focus in order to write from home while raising her children. The result, obviously, is *The Mommy Brain*. Given her position